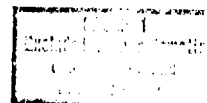S E C R E T

CS/HPM-25
6 December 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR : All CS Historical Officers and Writers

SUBJECT   : Summaries for CS Historical Papers

1. From time to time we have discussed with some of you
the pros and cons of writing summaries for CS historical
papers, but no formal guidance has been issued on the subject,
either in the Handbook (CSHB 5-13-1) or in previous CS/HPM's.
Perhaps for this reason, only a few of the longer CS histor-
ies prepared in the past have included summaries of the con-
tent, but those few that had summaries were made more widely
useful papers in almost every instance by their inclusion.

2. The purpose of this memorandum is to call your atten-
tion to the value of including summaries for certain histori-
cal papers and to encourage you to write a summary whenever,
in your judgment, it would enhance the readability and use-
fulness of the paper you are preparing.

3. Some say that a summary at the beginning is just a
device to help a lazy reader, that it tends to discourage
reading important details in the main body of the paper. This
may be true in some cases, but we should remember that most

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of our historical papers may have at least two kinds of interested readers - specialists at the working level who need to learn all details of what and how things were done, and persons at the managerial or policy level who want a clear picture of what happened and why, but who do not usually need all the details and often simply do not have time to read and digest the whole text for a long or complex historical paper.

4. Of course, not every historical paper needs a summary. Whether or not any given history will benefit from a summary depends partly on its length but also on its subject matter, the way it is organized, and the amount of detail included in the text. We believe that usually nothing would be gained by preparing a summary for a concisely written monograph on a single uncomplicated operation or for a quickly readable narrative of a small station. But a highly detailed account of a major operational program, a station history describing a large variety of operations and relationships, or a history of the organization and functions of a large headquarters component, would almost always be improved by the addition of a good summary at the beginning of the paper.
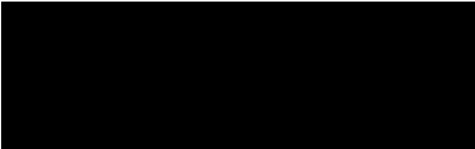
5. Preparing a good summary takes a great deal of objectivity and careful analysis of the paper as a whole. Perhaps

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this is obvious, but it can hardly be emphasized too strongly that a poor summary - one that just skims the surface and omits essential points, stresses the wrong things, or promotes a subjective point of view - only misleads the reader and is worse than no summary at all. To be useful, a summary must reflect the really important points of the whole story, summing up as concisely as possible the most significant developments, problems, and accomplishments (or failures), brought out in the body of the paper.

6. We should bear in mind that a chronology or chronological table listing dates of pertinent key developments, while a very useful adjunct of any history covering an extended period, is not a substitute for a summary of content. (For notes on the use of chronologies, see CSHB 5-13-1, pages 12 and 22, and Attachment to CS/HPM-22, page 8.) Some papers may usefully include a chronology without a summary; others - highly detailed but with a relatively short time span - may need a summary but not a chronology; many of the longer and more complex will probably need both.

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Executive Secretary
CS Historical Board

LMF/rap

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